

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants have received and carefully reviewed the Office Action of the Examiner mailed November 7, 2006. Claims 1-15, 18-25, 27-28, 31-42, 44-46, 48-49, 69-67, 69-70, and 73 remain pending. Claims 16-17, 26, 29-30, 43, 47, 50-59, 68 and 71-72 have been canceled without prejudice. Reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

As a preliminary matter, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner consider and return an initialed copy of the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 28, 2006.

Claims 1-3, 8-14, 16, 19, 24, 27, 28, 31, 73, 33-40, 42, 48, 49, 53-55, 57, and 58 are rejected as being anticipated by Cottrell (US 2002/0005435). Claims 60, 61, 63, 66, 67, and 69-71 are rejected as being unpatentable over Smith (US 2004/0245352). Claims 5-7, 15, 41, and 44 are rejected as being unpatentable over Cottrell. Claims 4, 56, and 59 are rejected as being unpatentable over Cottrell in view of Smith.

Applicants respectfully disagree with all of these rejections. However, in paragraph 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 17, 18, 20-23, 25, 32, 43, 45, 46, 62, 64, 65, 68, and 72 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. To gain prompt issuance of a patent, Applicants have elected to take the allowable subject matter, leaving the option open to pursue the rejected claims or other claims in one or more continuation applications.

More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to include the elements of objected to claim 17 and intervening claim 16. Claims 16 and 17 have been canceled without prejudice. As such, claim 1 is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 18 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 18 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 20 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 20 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 21 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 21 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Appl. No. 10/726,174
Amendment Dated February 5, 2007
Reply to Office action dated November 7, 2006

Claim 22 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 22 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 23 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 23 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 25 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 1. As such, claim 25 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 33 has been amended to include the elements of objected to claim 43. Claim 43 has been canceled without prejudice. As such, claim 33 is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 45 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 33. As such, claim 45 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 46 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 33. As such, claim 46 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 60 has been amended to include the elements of objected to claim 68. Claim 68 has been canceled without prejudice. As such, claim 60 is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 62 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 60. As such, claim 62 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 64 has been rewritten in independent form to include the elements of base claim 60. As such, claim 64 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 70 has been amended to include the elements of objected to claim 72 and intervening claim 71. Claims 71 and 72 have been canceled without prejudice. As such, claim 70 is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, all pending claims 1-15, 18-25, 27-28, 31-42, 44-46, 48-49, 69-67, 69-70, and 73 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested. If a telephone interview would be of assistance, please contact the undersigned attorney at 612-359-9348.

Appl. No. 10/726,174
Amendment Dated February 5, 2007
Reply to Office action dated November 7, 2006

Respectfully Submitted,



Date: February 5, 2007

Brian N. Tufte, Reg. No. 38,638
CROMPTON, SEAGER & TUFTE, LLC
1221 Nicollet Avenue, Suite 800
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403-2420
Telephone: 612-677-9050
Facsimile: (612) 359-9349